

From the Catholic Advocate.

THE TRUE CHURCH. A SHORT ESSAY.

What ever may be said in eulogy of the pretended Reformation of the sixteenth century, and however extravagantly the authors thereof may be extolled, one fact will ever stand forth in bold relief, like some terrible writing upon the wall, to war the doubtful and make the guilty tremble; it is, that by the reformation, *truth and charity* have both suffered more grievously than human skill can describe. Its friends may regard the cause as glorious, and lament the evils which it produced as only incidental, just as the storm by which the atmosphere is rendered salubrious, may perchance leave left marks of its passage through the scattered forests, and across affrighted cities. But we regard it in causes, as well as consequences, as disastrous; a tornado of human passions, sweeping along upon the lower strata of air, and involving in the vortex of its whirl, everything, however, valuable and sacred, which lay in its path.

In newspaper essays, in the more pretending columns of pompous periodicals and reviews, in the declamation of school-boys, and in the speeches of legislature and statesmen, from whom at least wiser things might be expected, the present age and the two preceding, are extravagantly praised, for the rapid strides made by the mind in its onward march, for the increase of knowledge, the spread of intelligence, and a thousand important items of social progress and improvement; so that everything which occurs or has occurred, since the beginning of the sixteenth century, from the opening of a country school to the fabric of a steam engine, is gravely placed to the credit of the great religious revolution, which it is pretended removed all trammel from the wings of genius and gave the bible, to the world at large, as a heritage of blessings.

It is an easy thing to make pompous boasts and assertions, and to string out empty nonsense in elegant phrases, like sparkling gems of paste, set to glitter upon gilded pinchbeck; 'tis easy for men who know little to seem wise, and for men who know something more, like paid advocates, to dress up a bad cause until the worse appear the better reason. But as all men are not ignorant, and as even those who have been deceived, by some chance or other have their eyes opened at last, to see that "all that glitters is not gold," and all that is said boldly, and repeated often, is *not true*, so with regard to the stereotyped eulogies of the reformation, we discover on enquiry that there is but little real ground for them, and that they spring chiefly from a gratuitous liberality, on the part of the admirers and dupes, of this mighty falsehood in the history of religion.

If we admit that in all the mere material concerns of human life, in the sciences and arts, and rather in the industrial and mechanical arts, than in those of a more elegant and ornamented nature, that there has been extraordinary progress and advancement since the period of the reformation, we are far from admitting that

this result is the legitimate effect of that outrageous revolt against the Kingdom of Christ; and we think that all the improvements in the condition of mankind in a material point of view, can be sufficiently accounted for, by reference to inventions, and to the operation of causes, absolutely and entirely independent of Luther's desire for a wife, or the crimes and despotism of Henry VIII. We admit however, that, if men are material; if their destiny, like that of the crawling worm, be limited to the present theatre; if the thinking principle in them perish in the gloom of the grave with their moulderling remains; and if there be no dawning beyond, of another and endless existence; the reformation was a great and glorious epoch in the history of the world, because its tendency has been to give, to the present material interests of men, a superiority over their spiritual and future interests. And, supposing the soul immortal, and that there is a heaven, we still admit, that, if men will be gathered there when they die, no matter what they have *believed*, or how they have *lived* here below, the reformation was of great advantage, in as much that it did away with many restraints and difficult observances, only tolerable, because supposed either necessary or useful to secure our happiness hereafter. But if men, as the gospel teaches, can only be made free by the truths revealed through Christ, and can only gain heaven on conditions expressly stated by the Redeemer; then we maintain that the reformation has been a mighty curse to mankind, because it has covered the truths of the gospel with darkness and obscurity, and tendered it to many a hard task to discover what are the conditions upon which Christ offers as a place in his glorious Kingdom.

Men have progressed if you will "in the knowledge of this world; they are *wiser grown*, in their own generation;" have more of that "science which puffed up," since the reformation; and were this *entirely* the effect of the reformation, all carnal, worldly, material men might boast of the reformation as a glorious event. But as to real knowledge, as to the knowledge of religious truth, as to the science which avails for the eternal happiness of men, the movement, among all out of the Catholic Church, has been *retrograde*: and religious knowledge has at last become so unfixed, uncertain, obscure, and so loaded with disputation and controversy, as to be, for all practical purposes, equivalent to mere *nescience*—to unqualified ignorance. All the landmarks of truth have been broken down, all the prerogatives of spiritual authority have been opposed, all the tenets of faith have been controverted, all the revelations of Christ have been intrinsically examined by the light of erring reason, and in part or altogether rejected; all sorts and kinds of religious theories have been devised and preached; all kinds of sects have appeared and mingled in one battle field; and we ask in sadness, what one religious truth is *now known* by the whole Protestant world? We ask what *one truth* is so *certainly known* as to be received by all the divisions of Protestantism, and denied by none? This confusion, of

contradictory opinions and speculations, of itself implies ignorance; for if the truths in dispute, were once *known*, there would be an end to discussion. Investigation, inquiry and discussion cease, when there is precise and positive knowledge. No men dispute on the question, whether "two and two make four," whether "a part be less than the whole," whether "Caesar, Alexander, Washington and Napoleon lived." &c. These things are so well *known* and *ascertained* that dispute is impossible. The truths of revelation are *facts* to be known, and when *known* there can be no dispute about them. The disputes, and controversies of the religious world therefore prove a lamentable *want of knowledge*, that is, a very great ignorance of religious truth. And, as far as Protestantism has affected the present age, we maintain that it should be called "the age of religious ignorance," or if you prefer "the age in which Christians are very wise for this life, and very ignorant concerning the next." As sects have continued to multiply ever since the epoch of the reformation, and daily more and more of the tenets of faith have been involved in disputation; so has religious ignorance continued to spread, until Christians are pained to find the ranks of the unbeliever, on every side augmented to a fearful extent. Persons, of good education, are driven by the disputer of professing Christians and by their uncharitable bickerings, to the very abyss of deism. Such a condition is certainly not less lamentable, than that of the thousands of poor creatures, whom bible-loving England keeps toiling in her mines, and whose ignorance is so great that, though grown to man's estate, they have heard nothing of Jesus Christ and nothing of the mighty work of redemption. Which is worse, a reformation which has produced infidels by the legitimation which allows the rich to leave the poor in the ignorance of the heathen? But it matters not which is worse, the reformation of the sixteenth century will have to rest under the blame of both these sad results.

We cannot take up space to manifest, that no other result, should, from the first have been expected from the reformation; but an increase of religious ignorance; that the authors of this revolt, were carnal, worldly unprincipled men, impelled by their passions, and regardless of the interests of religion and the glory of God; that they acted upon false principles for a mere temporary effect, and, with glaring inconsistency, opposed the very same principles, when others assumed them, to support opinions and views contrary to their teaching; that the princes and potentates, who supported and encouraged "these bold bad men," were also actuated by the very worst motives; that the people, who rallied round them, were lured by the liberal privileges and great immunities offered to their passions, and were not, as some have falsely pretended, to a higher and purer life; these facts can all be proved—indeed, they have all been substantiated by irrefragable testimony, in works of every size and form, accessible to such as desire information.

We design to invite attention to a question, which naturally occurs, upon viewing

the dissensions and disputes about religious truth, and the continual injury done to the very essence of Christianity, in the destruction of charity among men; viz. whether the divine author of religion did not, in some way provide for the preservation of religious truth and charity, and establish defences against the possibility of the state of things now existing among Protestants?

We have seen that the numberless and endless controversies, waged with bitterness among those who call themselves Christians, clearly, imply and evidently show, a want of knowledge of the truths of religion, and we are justified in attributing, to the pretended right of private judgment, these bitter disputes and dissensions. If Christ then made provision against the sad result, he could not have authorised the cause, and consequently, in his plan, the unity of truth and the dominion of charity, must be secured against the destructive pretensions of private judgment. All who claim the name of Christian, admit that Jesus Christ established a Church, since the different denominations are heard to speak frequently and warmly about the Church of Jesus Christ.

To be Continued.

The Westminster Review.

August Number.

The character of this journal is well known, and needs no general delineation on the present occasion. Our acquaintance with its pages has been rather interrupted of late; but we are glad to renew our intimacy with it as a moderate, intelligent, and tolerably impartial expounder of principles and opinions from which, of course, we constantly dissent, but with which, so long as they remain in the land of the living, all educated men ought to have more or less acquaintance. The articles on free trade we pass over, with the remark that they are generally acute, but rarely consoling! The third paper is on Mr. Tyler's supposed discovery of the complicity of the great Apostle Knox, in the murder of Rizzio. Though the reviewer denies the charges most stoutly, a spirit of impartiality compels us to declare, that if any one wishes to be convinced of Knox's substantial guilt, he need go no further than the pages now before us. The only direct evidence, one way or the other, consists of a contemporary document; a list of the "names of such as were consenting to the death of David." This list is found pinned to a letter of Randolph's—by whom we cannot say—and endorsed by Cecil's clerk.

The reviewer tries to destroy the credibility of this list by a series of reasonings not very conclusive to our mind. But, at any rate, he leaves the question thus—Knox's guilt cannot be disproved and his name is mentioned as concerned in the murder, in a private memorandum sent to Cecil, for his own personal information. Dilute this as you please, it still contains matter for very grave suspicion in the absence of disproof. Besides this we have it admitted, "that Knox thought idolaters were punishable with death; that he expressed his satisfaction at this particular murder; and that immediately after it he fled precipitately from Edinburgh." Call you this backing your friends? It also appears to be admitted "that the language of the prayers and sermons during the fast immediately preceding the murder, was"—at least *suspicious*; and that the preachers—"Exhortations tended to excite violence and bloodshed, and inculcated the duty of inflicting vengeance on the persecutors of God's people." With these admissions we care little about the "pinned list." The reformation in Scotland was confessedly established by a man who was a murderer at heart, and who richly deserved the gallows.—Tablet